New Policies for the benefit of the Rural Poor

4208. SHRI V. RAJAN CHELLAPPA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) what are the new policies which will be implemented for the benefit of the rural poor;

(b) whether any effort is being made to reduce overhead costs;

(c) whether it is a fact that a good portion of the expenditure of such programmes is going for costly overheads; and

(d) what steps are proposed to ensure that amount spent for rural development reaches the targetted beneficiaries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI UTTAMBHAI PATEL): (a) to (d) IRDP (Integrated Rural Development Programme) and JRY (Jawahar Rozgar Yojana) are two major poverty alleviation programmes being implemented by the Government to improve the quality of life of the rural poor. Several new policy initiatives have been taken under IRDP to improve the *efficiancy* of this programme for benefiting the rural poor. These steps include increase in the average level of investment per family to Rs. 12,000- during the current year, extension of Fmily Credit Plan in 213 districts of the country for intensive dosage of assistance, liberalisation of norms for infrastructure development, etc. Besides, efforts are also being made to ensure that administrative cost of running the scheme is kept within the reasonable limit. The celling limit on administrative cost is 10% of the allocation at all-India level. DRDAs (District Rural Development Agencies) which exceed the norms for administrative expenditure are penalised through deductions at the time of release of 2nd instalment of funds. Further, to ensure that the amount spent reaches the targetted beneficiaries, the identified list of families below the poverty line is duly approved in Gram Sabha meetings and necessary safeguards/cross checks are applied to ensure that only eligible beneficiaries are benefited under the programme.

Similarly, JRY has been intensified during 1993-94 in 120 selected backward districts of the country where there is concentration of unemployment and under-employment. Besides, the Government also launched 'Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS)' with the aim to provide 100 days of assured employment during lean agricultural season to the persons in the age group of 18—60 years who are in need of work and seeking for it. Under this scheme, a maximum of 2% of total funds can be spent on administration/contingency. However, as per the guidelines, strict economy in incurring the expenditure on administration/contingency has to be observed by the implementing agencies.

To ensure that the amount spent on the schemes reaches the targetted beneficiaries, the programmes are closely monitored through State Level Coordination Committees (SLCCs) as well as through periodical reports and returns and seminars/workshops. Besides, the Ministry or Rural Development also monitors. The schemes through 'Area Officers' scheme by deputing senior officers of the Ministry/ Department to selected districts/States. Based on their observations, Necessary corrective measures are taken up to improve the implementation of this programme.